



E30 Unusual Suicide: Staged Homicide in a Carbon Monoxide Setting

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the importance of a complete and thorough medicolegal death investigation using a multidisciplinary team approach in an atypical suicide case. In the United States, the types of death investigation and resources vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The presentation of this case study will demonstrate how and why these complex cases must be thoroughly investigated by medicolegal death investigators. Information, resources, and suggestions will be presented to assist in investigating complex suicides with a multidisciplinary team approach.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing information regarding unusual suicides and the medicolegal death investigation process used to investigate complex staged death scenes.

A documented, staged homicide used to cover up a suicide death is uncommon in the United States and much can be learned in how to appropriately process the scene regardless of pre-investigation assumptions. Presented is a case study of an intelligent 27-year-old who methodically planned and staged his death to make it appear as a homicide. In the staged crime scene, the decedent's legs and arms were bound and tied together in a vehicle inside his detached garage. Evidence to suggest carbon monoxide poisoning was present. This presentation also supports why a thorough investigation of both the scene and surrounding areas is crucial in all investigations. This crime scene was located in the garage; however, inside the residence, there was evidence of a fire, a destroyed phone, and several windows that were caulked shut.

The lack of common physical findings in the setting of a decomposed body and how the decomposition of the body affects not only the initial examination but also the toxicology findings will be discussed. The toxicology findings in this case came back negative for carbon monoxide and this significantly affected the investigation. This case highlights the importance of obtaining and reviewing all medical, social, education, and criminal records as part of a complete investigation and illustrates how those records may be used in determining the manner of death.

This presentation includes case information regarding the extensive death scene investigation, which involves the review of pertinent medical records, review of social records, autopsy findings, toxicology findings, and relevant interviews conducted by the medicolegal death investigator and law enforcement personnel utilized prior to ruling the death a suicide.

The skills needed to investigate these types of deaths will be discussed, as will the resources available to gain that knowledge and information including interviewing, forensic photography, chain of custody, identification, notification, and death certificates, among others.

Staged Crime Scene, Restraints, Carbon Monoxide